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Bringing practice closer to research - seeking integrity, sincerity and authenticity

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Abstract

This article tackles the abundance of inconsistent terminologies that surround the discourse on practice and research. The text builds on recent debates on creative practice and education, sparked through the EU-funded project SHARE. I argue that a shift in contemporary continental philosophy in the 1970s, which nudged the body into a more central position, allowed for creative practice and with it 'embodied knowing' to slowly push open the doors of the academies. I will show that practice today is already well embedded in some UK institutions, and I put forward that rather than thinking of an apologetic *Practice as...*, *Performance as ...*, we should refer more resolutely to what I here term 'Practice Research'. I demystify notions of validation of creative practice by re-emphasizing the artistic qualities of 'integrity, sincerity and authenticity', borrowed from the 2013 BBC Reith lecturer and artist/potter Grayson Perry.

Keywords

Practice Research

embodied knowing

validation

integrity

practice nearly always comes first, and it is only later that people theorize about practice. (Pears 1971: 29)

Practice (as) research – definitions

There are numerous, and possibly rather confusing, terminologies that describe practitioners engaging in creative practice in the arts and producing research or knowledge.¹ The term practice as research (PaR) is possibly leading the way in the confusion of inconsistent terminologies, followed by *practice-led* or *practice-based* research (PbR) as well as Practice as Research in Performance (PARIP). The latter was a University of Bristol-based project that ran between 2001 and 2006, directed by Professor Baz Kershaw at the Department of Drama Theatre, Film and Television, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB).² In 2003 the Performing Arts Learning and Teaching Innovation Network (Palatine), the UK's Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Dance, Drama and Music (2000–2011) commissioned a report where they also set out protocols and guidelines on PaR (Nelson and Andrews 2003) and this document is still referred to today.

With such inconsistency in the usage of the terms, there also follows some confusion of what is considered research,³ what is practice and how these might combine. Suzanne Little, in her chapter in *Dunedin Soundings* (2011) entitled 'Practice and performance as research in the arts', also points to the inconsistencies. Whereas in the United Kingdom and Australia government bodies have issued guidelines of what constitutes this kind of research in creative practice, and more importantly how it could be assessed, validated and ranked (for validating an academic's profile and for ranking research bids in funding agencies), other countries have not quite accepted or warmed to the idea of PaR. In Australia and in the

United Kingdom the terms PaR and PARIP tend to be used, the latter often involving more performance elements than the former, which tends to focus on the creative processes associated with the production of an artistic output. PbR and practice-led research (PIR) are terms also used in the sciences, and in the United States the term Performance as Research (PaR) tends to be more common. There are many variations and overlaps of the term.

Today, the idea of creative practice as a research activity has a firm foot in the doors of several universities, and for some time many UK institutions have been offering research degrees (Ph.D.s) in creative practice, SARC (where I am based), being a major centre for conferring research degrees to sonic arts practitioners. Robin Nelson has argued that practice, specifically performance studies and performing arts, is key to contemporary understanding of ontologies as they are linked with

virtual reality, computer games and the construction of cyborgs; in social constructions, both in the performing arts and in everyday life; in neuroscience and perception; in presence and absence, identity and its fragmentation. The multi and interdisciplinary academy is gradually coming to recognise a range of research projects to which performance as a mode of inquiry is intrinsic. (2006/2009a: 12)

Many researchers are highly skilled in teasing out this type of enquiry, a certain knowledge that goes into practice and that comes out of it.⁴ Before looking at how creative practice generates knowledge, I want to suggest that there is an urgent need to bring practice and research closer. Rather than thinking of a delineated and bipolar way of practice on one side and research on the other, referring in unnecessary apologetic ways to *Practice as...*, *Performance as ...*, *Practice-based...*, *Practice-led...*, *Practice as Research in Performance...* – ... as if what? – one may ask, I argue that practitioners have a duty to

intimately join practice and research. I want to suggest that we refer more resolutely to Practice Research (abstaining from ‘...as if’) and in that way deny elevating research over practice, but indeed, that we put practice before research. I consider research to emerge out of practice; practice leading and informing research, and in the next section I will examine how we might consider Practice Research within higher education institutions.

Towards the body

Arguments to include ‘practice-based’ work into a research environment was important at the time of PARIP and Palatine – and may I recall that the debate is now around ten years old – as previously traditional approaches to the study of art had been complemented and extended by research, but this type arts research had not been lead or informed by practice. During the last ten years there was a major shift in HEI offering degrees that placed practice at the heart of their research programmes – something that in 2015, in the United Kingdom at least, we do not necessarily question anymore, but it was not always that way and this is important to bear in mind. A number of art/creative practice activities were not considered to be research, and while performance practices had always contributed to knowledge, the idea that it could be more than the production of a work, that it could generate an intellectual enquiry, stimulate debates, and that it could contribute to new insights and new understandings, was novel.

One of the issues surrounding this debate was the definition of what research actually is, specifically with view to the fact that traditional research tended to be divided into *qualitative* and *quantitative* paradigms. Robin Nelson had contended that creative practice does not typically construct rational arguments, since the organic nature of creative processes is not characteristically data-based, therefore questioning the laying out of methodologies in advance (2009a). Before proceeding, it is worth briefly recalling these two

paradigms:

Quantitative research, often aligned with science-based research, relies on the notion of objectivity, where a hypothesis and/or research questions are presented at the start, and these are then tested against measurable, empirical evidence. It is a type of research that is built on a specific methodology, on the presentation of rules of procedures about certain matters and their analysis. Billig had emphasized that the idea behind methodological rules is that they are impersonal in order for two different researchers to be able to arrive at identical conclusions for the same problem. This also implies that individual bias is eliminated from the process of investigation. In this way, 'methodology attempts to standardize the practice of the social sciences and to eliminate quirkiness' (in Seale 2004: 14). However, scholarship and specifically *qualitative research practices*, the ones that tend to be aligned more with the creative arts and the humanities, very much make use of such individual quirkiness and assumes a breadth and depth of knowledge as well as the making of 'connections between seemingly disparate phenomena' (Seale 2004). Thus, the researcher expects to encounter discrepancies in meaning, which may in fact be the beginning of a new search for different texts and provoke further enquiry and reading. According to Billig, this way of working and thinking is 'not to follow a preset programme, laid down in advance by a methodologist, but to gather up clues which can nudge the search one way or another' (in Seale 2004: 15). This type of approach in which the scholar cannot hide behind a methodological procedure, an approach that is open to mistakes and the idiosyncrasies of the particular case, aligns with many practice-based frameworks. This implies that the role of the researcher and the way she makes sense of the world around her is taken into account in qualitative research approaches.⁵

The phenomenological approach of reciprocal specification and selection of French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty in his work *The Structure of Behaviour* (1963) surely paved some of the way for the thinking behind qualitative research approaches. During the

1960s Merleau-Ponty expanded on his phenomenological thinking and described the organism not as a passive input–output device, but as the initiator of the world, of being involved in the making of his surroundings, as one that in fact contributes to the enactment of his surrounding environment. He states,

Since all the movements of the organism are always conditioned by external influences, one can, if one wishes, readily treat behavior as an effect of the milieu. But in the same way, since all the stimulations, which the organism receives, have in turn been possible only by its preceding movements, which have culminated in exposing the receptor organ to the external influences, one could also say that *behavior is the first cause of all the stimulations*. Thus the form of the excitant is *created* by the organism itself, by its proper manner of offering itself to actions from the outside.

(1963: 13, original emphasis)

This turn in twentieth-century-philosophy, by nudging the body into a more central position, pointed to the limits of scientific methods and methodological reasoning. The German philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer had expressed this quite strongly in his work *Truth and Method* (1989), where he talked about the limits of the scientific method, investigating instead the nature and conditions of understanding meaning. He argued that the true meaning of language (and I extend language to include creative practices) rises above the limits of methodological reasoning. This general rise in the 1970s and 1980s of what was termed ‘theory’ as a key dimension of cultural practices contributed to the development of a ‘debate on the role of artists and artworks in the making of knowledge about how the world is constituted, encountered, experienced, imagined or known’ (in Wilson and van Ruiten 2013: 24).

Creative practice as a model for knowing, for experiencing and for theorizing is echoed by Mick Wilson in a speech he gave at the 12th ELIA Biennial, Vienna, where he closely linked knowledge to practice ('art knows' he says), stating that '[a]rt knows provisionally, fragmentarily, in a way that is incomplete' (2012). Practitioners often experience in their doing that – in playing an instrument, or in making a sculpture – their practice already *knows*. It might be a subconscious 'knowing' which needs their bodies and tools/instruments to express the knowledge on their behalf, but when their practice has managed to express itself, even if provisionally or fragmentarily, they are in a very good position to theorize it and to conceptualize their 'embodied knowing', or what English artist David Hockney calls 'secret knowledge', a knowledge that arises through handling materials in practice.

Embodied knowing

The idea of 'embodied knowing' has a long tradition in contemporary continental philosophy and is often noted in the writings of Hungarian born scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi (1891–1976) who in his work *The Tacit Dimension* (1966) states that we always have some knowledge that we cannot articulate, something he calls 'tacit knowledge'. Polanyi gives the example of a tool that when in use becomes more than just a tool, stating that when we use the tool, we soon do not feel it as such, but we feel *through* the tool. The tool becomes an extension of our hand and we start to inhabit the tool in the same way that we may inhabit our own body. The notion of 'tacit knowledge' had found similar resonances well before Polanyi in the thinking of German philosopher Martin Heidegger. In his seminal work *Being and Time* (1927/1962) Heidegger had argued that knowledge arises out of being absorbed in materials and processes, and that the world announces itself through a becoming explicit of our equipment, our tools (what he termed 'Zeug'). Heidegger contended specifically that a tool which is 'ready-to-hand' (zuhanden) is

used as 'etwas um zu'/'something in-order-to' (1927/1962: 292), and that the more we seize the tool, the more primordial our relationship to it becomes. This becoming primordial with our equipment, the becoming 'close' with the 'things in itself' (Ding-An Sich') allows us to immerse ourselves. We do not notice the tool unless it is missing or broken. When the 'ready-to-hand' is out of order or broken, we notice this disturbance and therefore the task we were carrying out becomes explicit or noticeable (Heidegger gives the famous example of a hammer, 1962: 297). The violin player's performance will abruptly come to a halt when one of her strings breaks. The reed or brass player will invariably have to stop in order to undo the sticky keypad or the stuck valve, which has become glued to the instrument. The instrument or tool is out-of-a-specific-order and will no longer allow for the production of the desired sounds. Therefore, and this is Heidegger's argument, the world announces itself through the becoming explicit of what we are doing; the assignment (performing an instrument or hammering nails into a wall) becomes noticeable through notions of 'disturbance', through a 'breakdown' in the tool and our changed relation to the tool. It is through such breakdown that the assignment, our task, has become explicit and thoroughly altered.

Barbara Bolt (2007) argued that such embodied, tacit or situated knowledge, which according to her emerges through research processes 'has the potential to be generalised so that it sets wobbling the existing paradigms operating in a discipline', and more importantly she states that practice can become theory-generating, but only if we can conceive of practice not as much driven by theoretical and conceptual concerns, but as the materials and processes which are productive in their own right.

The issue with putting practice 'in front of' research (syntactically and as a way of generating theory) in a university context is that often a practitioner's research is evaluated and validated by academics who seem to be linked almost umbilically to traditional scientific research paradigms. The argument tends to be that theory/method needs to

precede doing, and in that way practice can be seen easily as ‘anarchistic’, something where ‘anything goes’. Interestingly, Paul Feyerabend had argued for an ‘anarchistic’ approach to methodology. He stressed that the history of science consists not only of pure facts and conclusions drawn from those, but that it ‘also contains ideas, interpretations of facts, problems created by conflicting interpretations, mistakes, and so on’ (in Seale 2004: 196). He says,

those who look at the rich material provided by history, and who are not intent on impoverishing it in order to please their lower instincts, their craving for intellectual security in the form of clarity, precision, ‘objectivity’, ‘truth’, it will become clear there is only *one* principle that can be defended under *all* circumstances and in *all* stages of human development. It is the principle: *anything goes*. (in Seale 2004: 198 original emphasis)

This does not imply an absence of discipline, but an acknowledgement that approaching Practice Research in terms of traditional discipline models from within other university sectors (medicine, biology, engineering) is highly problematic, and something that, unfortunately, is still done in some HEIs.

The idea of ‘anything goes’ is an interesting one, though, and one that has been preoccupying the ‘art world’ – and I am referring here to a world that produces tangible, commercially viable objects (paintings, photos or pots), where there tends to be a close relation between money and art, which is not always the case in the ephemerality of performance. One might see Marina Abramovich as one of the obvious exceptions!

Anything goes

The 2013 BBC Reith lecturer and artist/potter Grayson Perry stated in his third Reith lecture that the art world has changed and that pretty much anything can be art now; that anything goes. By the mid-1960s, the early 1970s most things had been either tried or suggested, and Perry says that we are now in a state where anything can be art, which according to him implies that ‘formally art is in its end state’ with innovation seen as mere ‘tweaking’ rather than coming up with entirely new ideas and concepts. ‘You can do anything now in the art world, and if you do it in the right way and you’re good at it, you will find a place for yourself’, Perry states. There may be this laissez-faire attitude of the art world where ‘anything goes’, but at the same time Perry bemuses what he calls the ‘messy play lifestyle accessory of the Fifty Shades of Grey generation’, which, so he argues, the radical art of the 1960s has turned into. If the French conceptual artist Yves Klein in the 1960s was able to do one of his (then) outrageous *Anthropometries* performances (where he painted nude models with his famous blue paint and printed them onto canvasses), these days you can buy an entire art kit (loveisartkit.com) that includes a canvas, body paint and even slippers, which you put on after you have carried out your bodily canvas drawing to go to the bathroom and wash off your paint. ‘You can make art while you make love’, Perry amusingly says.

However, and this is the poignant idea that Perry puts forward, despite the laissez-faire attitude of the art world where ‘anything goes’, Perry identifies limits, and one of those is outrage or shock for the sake of it, recalling the famous example of Chinese artist Zhu Yu, who thought shock was the entire point of art, and had himself photographed eating a stillborn baby (*Eating People* was performed at the Shanghai arts festival in 2000). On the other hand, Perry states that outrage has also somewhat become domesticated – and many of the old avant-garde tend to belittle today’s artistic comfy set-ups for performance artists (Tate Modern has specifically dedicated places for these!), something that is more akin to what Perry calls a ‘petting zoo for performance artists’ – whereas the 1960s generation

artists had to run around ‘in the nude covered in offal in some freezing warehouse’. Perry strongly believes that qualities such as *integrity, sincerity and authenticity* are what artists need and that this is something they should protect.

Enabling integrity, sincerity and authenticity?

What then is our job as educator or as someone who is meant to tease out of students’ Practice Research? I certainly do not lay claim to being able to ‘teach’ qualities such as integrity, sincerity and authenticity, but I do feel that in order to incite our students to best work out their own embodied knowing or tacit knowledge, and in that process to ensure that their work can stand up to a university’s research vision, that of producing ‘rigorous’ and ‘significant’ pieces of research, an educator’s task is to clear a path where students have the freedom to revel in crazy ideas and the interpretations of facts; where they may encounter problems created by conflicting understandings; where they can make mistakes, and where they ultimately can look ‘sideways’, what architect and digital media theorist Richard Coyne (2005: 11) refers to as seeing things in unusual fashion by ways of questioning conventional frameworks. And in the process of being allowed to fail and to question we might be able confer characteristics of integrity, sincerity and authenticity, and hopefully we can incite creative ways of thinking. In order to encourage this, we also need the right conditions. Kelley and Littman (2009) talk about encouraging creativity and innovation, which, according to them, is not achieved by putting a lot of creative people together, but, ... if creativity is regarded as a basic human trait that can be encouraged or inhibited depending on the environment in which it is taking place, then it is only necessary to ensure the right conditions are present for it to flourish, regardless of whether the individuals are labeled as ‘creative’ (Kelley and Littman 2009, in Malins 2013).

Stuart Macdonald (2013) further argued for creative environments to embed work that is

carried out in multidisciplinary teams that involve greater contact with a range of creative practitioners, and that have a focus on preparation for the real world and its challenges.

Macdonald names, for example, live project work or internships and experiences that are ‘drawn from the challenging contexts of our time’ (2013: 65).

Validation

In any case, whether live performances or internships, practitioners in a university have to justify their work and have their practice judged and validated by external panels, albeit in varying formats and ways.⁶ This is partly due to the fact that a flourishing rhetoric of the creative economy has been seen to be subsuming ‘art and education under an economic evaluative logic, advocating return-on-investment and market-like competition for resources in the public sector’ (Wilson and van Ruiten 2013). This has led to a cultural policy rhetoric, invaded with terms such as ‘cultural industries’, ‘creative economy’, ‘creativity’ or ‘clients’, where validation has become a major factor for how we carry out Practice Research. The overarching preoccupations around this issue of validating Practice Research have been questions of a mainly procedural and epistemological nature, including:

‘What should research from the arts be?’

‘How should the concept of research be translated into artistic practice?’

‘Is it legitimate to deploy an array of research-related concepts (such as method, object, knowledge claim, evidence, reproducibility, originality) and research-related institutional structures (such as peer-review publishing, doctoral awards, research training, state of the art review, examination) with reference to artistic practices?’

‘Who should validate artistic research (and in what institutional matrix should the research culture of artists be vetted)?’ (in Wilson and van Ruiten 2013: 25)

So, who should validate this type of Practice Research?

For any artistic event – a festival being programmed, a gallery show being curated – several people form part of the so-called validation process, including artists, teachers, dealers, collectors, critics, curators, media or the public. Grayson Perry mentions such plethora of people involved in the ‘validation’ process and who form, so Perry facetiously says, a ‘seemingly lovely consensus’ around what good art is. Perry proposes his own ideal formula for judging art in the twenty-first century, and seeing that it is such a subjective problem and therefore impossible to find a kind of empirical way of judging quality, his proposal teasingly reads as follows:

What you do, you get a half-decent, non-offensive kind of idea, then you times it by the number of studio assistants, and then you divide it with an ambitious art dealer, and that equals number of oligarchs and hedge fund managers in the world. And that is the ideal formula for art in the 21st century. (Perry, 2013)

Overall though Perry’s idea here of validating practice, in that if enough of the right people think it’s good, it probably is good art, might seem simplistic but it chimes with judging performance in a university context. Here, several examiners will come to an agreement and if the majority of the panel thinks it is a ‘good’ performance, for example, then an equivalent mark of good is awarded. We can illuminate further how best to validate Practice Research and that is by considering the idea that a practitioner must challenge her practice as to its own being. Perry suggests that artworks must become challenged as to their artiness. He gives the example of the poet W. H. Auden, who apparently liked heavy blankets on his bed, and when he found himself in a house without sufficient blankets, he took a painting in its frame off the wall and laid it on his bed, making it somewhat functional. In a similar example Brian Eno

‘normalised’ or ‘re-commode-ified’ Marcel Duchamp’s famous fountain/urinal (1917) in the era of ‘decommodification of art’,⁷ by urinating into it when the urinal was on display in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Eno’s real artistic intervention was not that he peed into Duchamp’s artwork, but that he pretended to do so by using a hidden bag of urine with plastic tubes in his suit that had a slit in its side, and in that way Eno made the whole idea of art collapse, or he ‘normalised’/‘re-commodified’ Duchamp’s urinal. He challenged the artwork as to its artiness. One of course must extend the idea of ‘art becoming challenged as to its artiness’ to music.

I always listen closely when I hear a musician challenge music to its ‘music-ness’, be it by playing with historically accepted structure or harmony for instance when improvising a new cadenza in a piano concerto, or by challenging generally accepted rhythmic or pitch structures – early examples of this might be the experimentation with pitch organization by Arnold Schoenberg or the pushing of boundaries in rhythmicity by Stravinsky, or the Cage-an shift to allow the focus on the in-between space/the silence, or indeed the impossibility of silence as propounded by his infamous 4’33, as well as the questioning of traditionally expected metre changes in rock music, as tested by Frank Zappa or early Venetian Snares.

There is of course an argument to be made that not all practice is research, the music of Frank Zappa for instance not necessarily being considered a piece of research, and evidently it was never conceived to be! For Practice Research to be seen as valid production of knowledge the practitioner constantly needs to be questioning her processes, while finding a suitable way of articulating the doing and thinking that led to a specific outcome. Questioning music to its music-ness (which Cage, Stravinsky and Frank Zappa all have done to some extent) can produce knowledge but as Practice Researchers we need to find convincing ways of articulating this in order for other researchers not engaged in Practice Research to recognize the research process.

I want to emphasize Perry’s qualities of *integrity, sincerity and authenticity* as I see these as

essential characteristics that are too often sidelined in a research environment, but that are crucial qualities by which we might understand the processes that drive Practice Research – as difficult and ephemeral these may be to conceptualize. As long as the Practice Researcher critically and reflectively inhabits the process of making, allowing herself to fail, to question and to put forward new insights, while being able to maintain *integrity, sincerity and authenticity*, I think that valid production of knowledge can occur and will be regarded as research.

Summary

This article has argued for bringing practice and research close. I suggested we refer more resolutely to Practice Research as opposed to a rather apologetic ‘practice as...’, which elevates research by delineating it with practice; but also it endorses research in the process of bestowing it with adjectives such as ‘performative’ or ‘artistic’.

I argued that a move towards the body through phenomenological theory of the 1960s and 1970s slowly pushed embodied or tacit knowledge into the doors of the universities, where in 2014 in many places, it serves as a well-established research methodology.

I have argued that in order to impart practice, and with it embodied knowledge, we need to pave the way for researchers to question frameworks, allowing them to engage in conflicting ideas, and ultimately enable them to ‘look sideways’, to see things in unusual fashion. In this process of questioning my hope is that we might be able confer characteristics of integrity, sincerity and authenticity.

And finally, as a Practice Researcher in a university, it is highly essential to look outside of the institution and to link it to sites beyond itself (what universities have entitled, rather patronizingly I feel, ‘public engagement’), in order to construct a genuine Practice Research culture. It is indispensable to understand that the university is one possible locus amongst

many, rather than an exclusive site for Practice Research, and it may be worth emphasizing that there is good and bad practice and good and bad research either within or without universities.

Any practitioner needs to embed herself into an interplay between practising and theory-generating, what I here have termed Practice Research, and by being a Practice Researcher within a university, I aim to inspire the next generation of Practice Researchers to show that being – in my case – a musician, a woman, as well as an academic is a possible combination, and that, if one can immerse oneself fully at all levels of the institution and be part of shaping one's environment, it can be highly creative work that allows research to be driven and made through one's practice.

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Notes

¹ It is worth emphasizing that terms such as 'research' and 'knowledge' are not unproblematic and most certainly not universal, as they are always bound to particular cultural and historical settings. French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard discusses knowledge in great depth (1979). Here he states, 'Knowledge and power are simply two sides of the same question: who decides what knowledge is, and who knows what needs to be decided' (1979: 8–9).

² PARIP's aim was to investigate creative-academic issues raised by practice as research. The outcomes of this project can be found online (<http://www.bris.ac.uk/parip/>) and some useful case studies and interviews contribute to a thorough resource for anybody wanting to understand the earlier debates surrounding practice as research. The group developed a national framework for the encouragement of the highest standards in representing practical-creative research within academic contexts.

³ For the purposes of the REF, research was defined 'as a process of investigation leading to new insights effectively shared'. The REF guidelines continue as follows:

Given that we see research as a process of investigation that has led to new insights effectively shared, we would expect all submitted work to include evidence of the research process, as well as presenting the insights in a form meeting the needs of its potential audience both within and beyond the academic community. (2009)

⁴ The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama runs an annual event, entitled 'Collisions', where they showcase their thriving PaR community, teasing out questions around what it means to be researching through practice (<http://www.collisionscentral.com/collisions-2014/>).

⁵ Evidently, there cannot be a clear distinction between 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' – and with the sciences opening up to qualitative research frameworks and creative practices embracing quantitative methods, the notion of *interdisciplinary*, of *mixed-method* approaches was also added to the pot of confusing terminologies. Brad Haseman saw an impatience emerge with the restrictive nature of existing paradigms, as he thought practice-led strategies and practices had 'overstretched the limits of qualitative research' (2007: 147). He demanded a third paradigm – which he called 'Performative Research', drawing

on J.-L. Austin's notion of performativity. It is beyond the scope of this article to elaborate further on what seems another terminological confusion, but what became clear is that there emerged a new way of conceptualizing what constituted research in practice, and new debates around the place of practice in the university research environment flourished.

⁶ Most submissions by Practice Researchers who are being put forward to the UK's REF exercise are likely to consist of the 'product' itself (a film, an installation, a score, a performance, etc.), backed up by some kind of documentation of the thinking and working processes that led to the outcome (a sketchbook or blog for instance), but also, and often considered more important, by a piece of complementary writing that situates the practice within a wider conceptual research context.

⁷ Here, the object-ness of a work of art was done away with in order to dematerialize it, to strip the object of its possibility for commodity or trade.